

Forum Executive Summary Washington Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study

Date: Friday, July 16

Time: 9:00 AM-12:30 PM

Location: Ramada Inn, 818 112th Ave NE, Bellevue, WA

9:00-9:20am Introductions and Overview

Dan O'Neal, Commerce Corridor Steering Committee Chair

9:20-10:30am Project Overview and Briefing

Arno Hart, Project Manager from Wilbur Smith and Associates

Jack Middleton and Chris Lawson from Huckell/Weinman Associates

Fred Kessler from Nossaman Guthner Knox Elliott LLP

Sherilyn G. Anderson from UBS Financial Services

This panel discussed the project as a whole and what would be included in the study. They explained all the elements of the study, including transportation, energy, fiscal challenges, environmental and community feasibility, possible flaws, legal issues, etc. The underlying study concept – developing a north/south transportation and energy corridor with a larger role for the private sector – was explained as the premise for the study with a focus was on possible private sector involvement in a multiuse corridor. Public-private partnerships were explained as they relate to a public facility with some component of private participation. The study area was defined as Lewis County northerly to the Canadian border and will be complete by December 2004.

There were 13 questions from the floor around environmental, traffic and project feasibility issues.

10:30-10:40am Break

10:40-10:55am Northwest Region Panel

Gordon Rodgers from Whatcom Council of Governments

Dan Pike, Transportation Director from Skagit Council of Governments

This panel discussed the impact that this project would have on the Northwest Region of Washington, specifically Whatcom and Skagit Counties. Rodgers wanted to address the study issues of why, what, how, transportation, energy, utilities and funding. He voiced concern about the impact on the area and the negatives that come with this project. He noted that we are being painted into a transportation corner where there is never enough, but did not see the resources were available to fix the problem. He also noted that a global response to inadequate public funding is often public/private partnerships, which may be a desirable compromise. Success depends on viability and economic feasibility. He noted in some areas it has proven a viable option, in others it has not.

Pike pointed out that the need for an alternative highway corridor does not seem critical at this point. He suggested that the best and most cost effective method to reduce congestion on I-5 is to address current deficiencies in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish County. Pike noted that some of these were currently being addressed. However, he said that there are a lot of funding needs not being met that we know will have a meaningful impact. He suggested looking at these before an

alternative highway corridor. Pike continued with the comment that there is a need to study pipelines and alternative rail corridors.

10:55-11:15am Central Puget Sound Panel

Kevin Murphy, Program Manager from Puget Sound Regional Council

Murphy explained that there are two principle-guiding documents: Vision 2020, the long-range planning and transportation strategy for the Central Puget Sound, and Destination 2030, the region's transportation plan. Mr. Murphy said that there are currently over two thousand projects on the regional system and noted that the plan hopes to reduce long-term costs and provide links in the transportation system. He said that the key area is lack of long-term funding.

11:15-11:30am Southwest Region Panel

Jaylyn Brown, Transportation Planner from Thurston Regional Planning Council

Rosemary Siipola, Transportation Planner and Manager for the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization for Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

This panel focused on the impact that the project would have on local communities economically and socially as well as the feasibility of the project. Several speakers brought up issues that would be created by the project, including lack of funding in other areas, impact on downtown corridors, and impact on areas that have been designated to be rural. They asked what the impact would be on current and planned transportation projects and what would be lost in the process.

A few minutes were taken for questions to all the panelists. These questions focused on clarification of points made within the various presentations.

11:30-12:30pm Public Comment Period

Senator Swecker led the public comment period.

Thirty-two citizens registered to testify; comments were limited to three minutes. Senator Swecker suggested that the speakers offer particular issues they think should be considered in the fact-finding process, that way the concerns could be best taken into consideration as study proceeds.

Public Comments focused on the following topics:

- Multimodal transportation service
- Privatization in the transportation arena
- Public/private partnerships and toll roads
- Transportation and land growth planning
- Private property concerns
- Need for development to balance with rural life
- Environmental and scenic costs
- Community costs
- Finances
- Suggestions of using rail